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ABSTRACT

In "Black Boy," Richard Wright triumphs over an ugly, racist world by fashioning an inspiring, powerful, beautiful, and fictionalized autobiography. To help students understand and appreciate his story in the cultural, political, racial, social, and literary contexts of its time, this casebook provides primary historical documents, collateral readings, and commentary. The selection of unique documents is designed to place in sharp relief the issue of pervasive racism in American society. The casebook is divided into the following chapters: Introduction; Literary Analysis: Themes and Structures of "Black Boy"; The Autobiographical Tradition; From Ben Franklin, the "Autobiography"; From Frederick Douglass, "Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglas"; From Booker T. Washington, "Up from Slavery"; From W.E.B. Du Bois, "The Souls of Black Folk"; The American Dream of Success; Thomas Jefferson, the Declaration of Independence; The 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendments; Crevecoeur, "What Is an American?"; From George Randolph Chester, Get-Rich-Quick Wallingford; The Dream Deferred; From the Black Code, Jim Crow, and the 1890 Mississippi Constitution; From "Up from Slavery"; From "The Souls of Black Folk"; Interview with Clyde Cox, Who Grew Up in Mississippi in the 1930s and 1940s; Race and Racism, Then and Now; From Joseph Alexander Tillinghast, "The Negro in Africa and America" (1902); From Ray Stannard Baker, "A Study of Mob Justice, South and North (1905); From William Graham Sumner, "Folkways" (1906); From Jean Finot, "Race Prejudice" (1906); Alfred Holt Stone, "Is Race Friction between Blacks and Whites in the U.S. Growing and Inevitable?" (1907-08); Theodore Bilbo, Remarks before the U.S. Senate about "Black Boy" (1945); Jonathan Tilove, "Scars of Slavery" (1994); and William C. Singleton III, "White? Black? Multi? Bi?" (1996). Each chapter concludes with study questions, ideas for written and oral examination, and suggested readings to aid students in examining the issues raised by Wright's autobiography. (NKA)

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